

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 10, page 3 with the following rewritten paragraph:

One problem associated with the CMP process is that some areas of the substrate may exhibit a dishing 50 in the conductive layer after a CMP process has been performed (see FIG. 3a 4a). This dishing 50 may be defined as the vertical distance from the top of a dielectric layer 40 to the bottom of a conductive layer 30 after the CMP process has been performed. The extent of the dishing 50 may be severe, in which the vertical distance from the top of the dielectric layer 40 to the bottom of the conductive layer 30 may be significant, or the extent of the dishing may be slight, and may include such things as scratches, abrasions, surface roughness, etc. Dishing refers to any sort of surface topography, such as mechanically induced topographic effects, such as pad bending, as is known in the art, but also to the chemically induced etching component often referred to as recessing, as is known in the art.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 1, page 4 with the following rewritten paragraph:

Dishing may lead to significant surface non-planarity in the conductive layer 30 which may cause various integration problems. For example, current processes tend to pass the topography of the dishing 50 from a lower conductive layer 30 to a higher conductive layer 32, which may cause hanging bumps 10 that can cause shorting between the various conductive layers (FIG. 3b 4b). Prior art approaches to reduce or remove the amount of dishing 50 in the conductive layer 30 include removing some portion 22 of the dielectric

layer 40 (see FIG. 3a 4a) by using a CMP process which planarizes the conductive layer 30 and the dielectric layer 40, thus substantially removing the dishing 50. However, this approach cannot be performed when a hardmask layer 60 (a layer that stops the etching, or removal of an underlying layer) is used on the dielectric layer 40 without removing or damaging the hardmask layer 60 (see FIG. 3e 4c).

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 18, page 15 and continuing through to line 3, page 16, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The barrier layer 316 and the sacrificial layer 110 (as well as the metal layer 318 disposed over and/or within the trench 312) may then be simultaneously removed using a CMP process, for example, until the underlying hard mask layer ~~108~~ 308 is exposed (FIG. 3c). The removal rates of the barrier layer 316, the sacrificial layer 310, and the metal layer 318 ~~disposed over and/or within the trench 312~~ may preferably be about equal to each other, but each of the removal rates of the aforementioned layers may be at least about 10, and may preferably be about 100 times greater than the removal rate of the hard mask layer 108.